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Winnipeg / News

Hundreds take part in rally at Forks to protest public health orders

Winnipeg Sun

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Crowd shot of an anti-mask rally at The Forks in Winnipeg on Sunday, April 25, 2021. PHOTO BY KEVIN KING /Winnipeg Sun

Several hundred people took part in a rally at The Forks on Sunday afternoon to protest the continuing public health orders and restrictions in place in Manitoba.

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Presented by Winnipeg Alternative Media and promoted by the Manitoba Together advocacy group, the rally featured controversial Ontario activist Chris “Sky” Saccoccia, who has rallied against health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic and is currently on a “Freedom Convoy” across Canada from Vancouver to Thunder Bay including stops in Saskatchewan on Saturday.



Other speakers were Minister Tobias Tissen from the Church of God near Steinbach and Manitoba Together's Patrick Allard.

Many of rally attendants carried signs reading "Unmask our kids now," "Stop giving your freedoms away" and "Hugs over masks."



Chris Sky speaks during an anti-mask rally at The Forks in Winnipeg on Sunday. PHOTO BY KEVIN KING /Winnipeg Sun

The crowd was estimated at around 500 but organizers announced the attendance at 1,000 people. The event was promoted as being mask optional and "social distancing is not expected," nor was it very evident.

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As a result of the rally, The Forks announced on Twitter that most tenants would be closing Sunday.

“The Forks does not condone gatherings that are against current public health orders. We were not asked for permission by anyone to host today’s rally. Out of an abundance of caution and to protect the safety of guests, tenants and employees, most tenants at The Forks will close for the remainder of today.”

The Forks does not condone gatherings that are against current public health orders. Out of an abundance of caution, most tenants at The Forks will close for the remainder of today. *If you have a reservation or appointment, check with the specific business for details. pic.twitter.com/ZAN4HD9PNp — The Forks (@TheForks) April 25, 2021

“As public health officials have said many times, public health orders are in place to prevent large gatherings, and enforcement action may take place if people gather in large groups,” said a provincial spokesperson on Sunday.

“As case numbers continue to rise and the more contagious B.1.1.7 variant of concern is seen in a higher proportion of cases, Manitobans are urged to reduce their close contacts, avoid crowded places and stay home as much as possible.”

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A counter-protester makes a point during an anti-mask rally at The Forks in Winnipeg on Sunday. PHOTO BY KEVIN KING /Winnipeg Sun

A lone counter-protester made an appearance at the rally, wearing a pink dress and carrying a sign reading, 'You look ridiculous.'

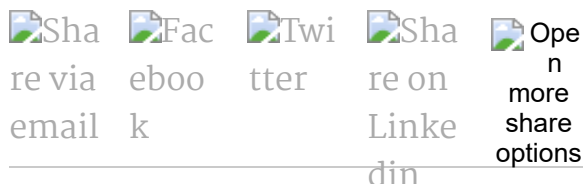
It was not clear if any tickets were issued for Sunday's rally for violation of Manitoba's public health orders.

Last week, Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe requested that rallies slated for Maple Creek, Sask., and Regina this weekend featuring Saccoccia not take place.

An Easter weekend “recreational party” in the Maple Creek area went “way over” the current outdoor gathering limit and featured “minimal” adherence to public health rules, according to provincial Health Minister Paul Merriman. More than 100 people attended that party and the ensuing outbreak involves the B.1.1.7 coronavirus variant, which was first identified in the U.K.

As of Friday, 40 cases of COVID-19 were tied to the event.

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